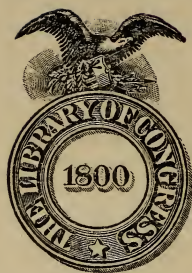
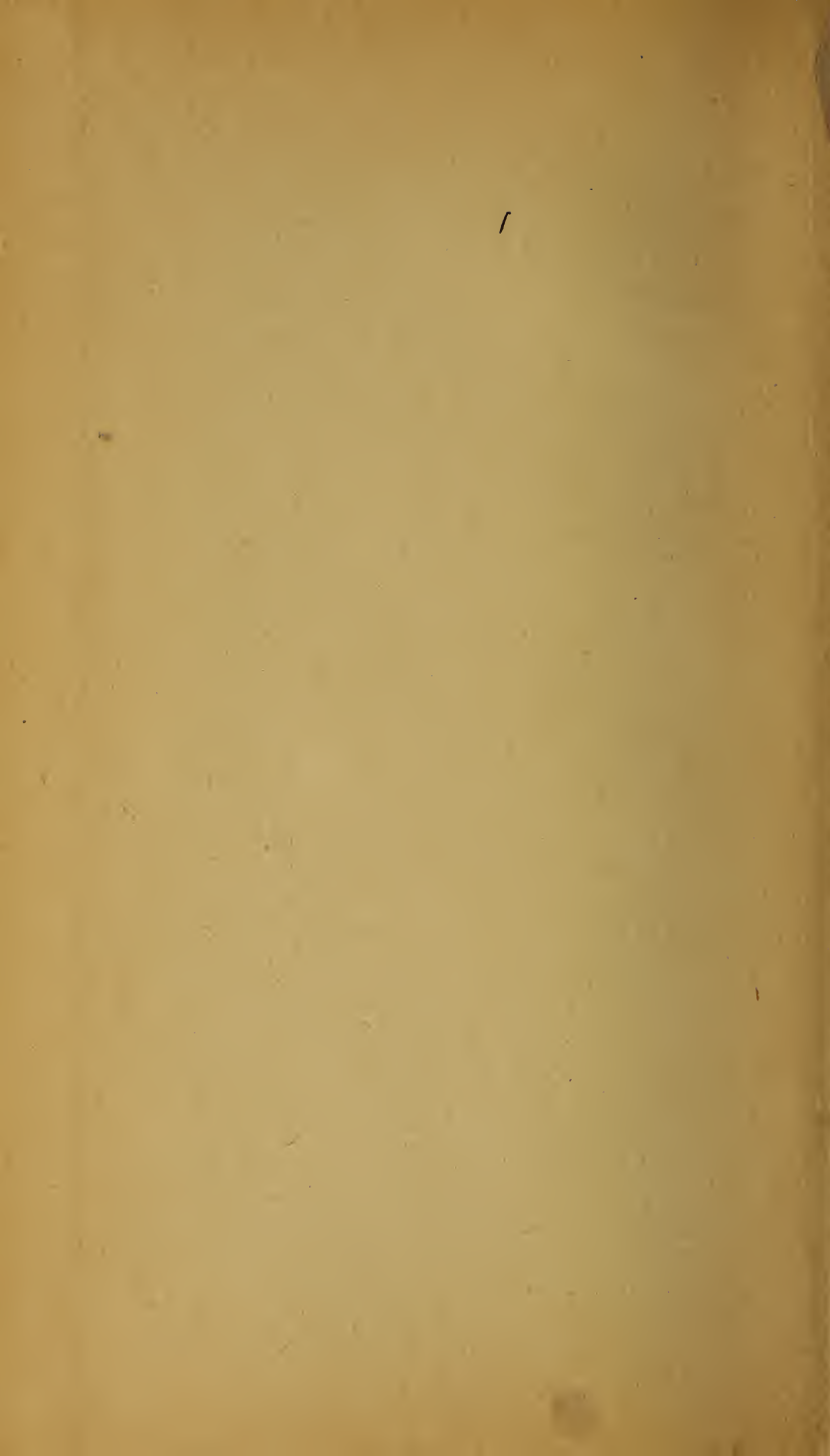


PR

5841

.W7F3





FABIOLA

OR,

THE AGE OF THE CATACOMBS,

BY

CARDINAL WISEMAN.

DRAMATIZED

BY THE REV. LEWIS GRIFFA.

2
0
3
3
3
3
3
3
3

4450C²

OSWEGO:

R. J. OLIPHANT, PRINTER.

1869.

TH

PM

See also

PR 5841
.W7 F3

Entered according to Act of Congress, on the 29th
day of April, 1872,
BY REV. LEWIS GRIFFA,
in the office of the Librarian of Congress, at Washington.

682

56

PREFACE.

All the world knows the late Cardinal Nicholas Wiseman, Archbishop of Westminster. His celebrity is due not only to his having so highly adorned with his talents and virtues the eminent position which he occupied, but in great part also to the excellency of his various theological and literary productions. Among these, the tale *FABIOLA*, condensed in this volume under the form of a Drama, holds a place, apparently humble, but in reality very remarkable. The principal good feature of this work is the ability and exquisiteness of taste with which the Cardinal managed, and succeeded, to interest the readers, no matter to what class they may belong, about subjects, dry in themselves, and for many, accustomed to seek in novel reading mere diversion, almost repulsive. Then, there breathes all through a certain suavity and unction, extremely engaging; so that, whilst the reader's mind, as he peruses it, sucks, as it were, with pleasure a great deal of historical and archæological information, he feels enraptured with the attractiveness of the narration, and is naturally brought, either to love the virtues displayed by some of its characters, or to detest the vices of the others.

Soon after its publication, the fitness of this tale to be turned into a most pleasing and edifying drama, was felt by many. The learned Dr. Oackley was the first that dramatized it. But if, in a literary point of view, the drama was excellent, experience showed that it little responded to the object of its author. It is written in poetry; it has too many unnecessary incidents; there is a great multiplicity of scenes, too difficult to be executed; thus Dr. Oackley's drama can scarcely be acted as it is: or, if it is, it becomes tedious and unintelligible to the audience.

The celebrated Thomas D'Arcy McGee did also dramatize Cardinal Wiseman's *FABIOLA*; taking, however, for his main subject what in it is a mere episode, viz: the martyrdom of St.

Sebastian and of St. Pancratius. Hence, he entitled his drama SEBASTIAN. In my opinion, D'Arcy McGee's SEBASTIAN has about the same objectionable nature as that of Dr. Oackley's, although it is equally, if not more, valuable as to the literary merit. Moreover, in both there is this inconvenience, that the authors put too much of their own in them, which deprives their productions of the peculiar charm and irresistible beauty which the Cardinal's own words possess.

My object in compiling this drama, was to avoid the inconveniences just expressed, and thus to bring nearer home to the public, by rendering its execution more practicable, this real gem of literature—Cardinal Wiseman's *FABIOLA*. Hence, I introduce scarcely any thing of my own in it; the dialogues (all prose) being almost entirely taken word by word from the Cardinal's book. In this respect, I may say with truth, this drama is not mine own composition, but his. Then I discarded altogether all mere episodes, and adhered exclusively to the principal subject of the narrative—the gradual conversion to Christianity of *Fabiola*; the incidents which brought it about, forming the whole plot, and the final development of the drama. Again, the scenes I introduced, are so very few, so plain, and disposed in such an easy way, that any stage manager will find no difficulty to arrange them.

I compiled this drama about ten years ago. Since, it was put in action at six different places, always with great success. It has proved particularly well adapted to Exhibitions of Educational Establishments. Having found that it is very difficult to carry it out well with the help of a simple manuscript, I finally determined to get it printed.

May God direct it to the good object for which I have intended it.

LEWIS GRIFFA.

Oswego, September, 1869.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

FABIOLA—A Heathen Roman lady.

AGNES—Fabiola's cousin, a Christian and martyr.

SYRA—Fabiola's slave, a Christian.

AFRA—A Negress, Fabiola's slave, a Heathen.

GRAJA—Another slave.

CECILIA—A blind girl, Christian and martyr.

FABIUS—Fabiola's father.

TERTULLUS—Prefect of Rome.

CORVINUS—his son, Fabiola's suitor.

FULVIUS—A spy, Agnes' suitor.

SEBASTIAN—Captain of the Imperial guards; a
Christian and martyr.

DYONYSIUS—A Priest and Physician.

A Deacon.

Soldiers.

Crowd of Christians.

Chorus of Virgins.

FABIOLA.

ACT I.

Christians and Heathens Contrasted.

SCENE.

FABIOLA'S RECEPTION ROOM.

[*Fabiola is reclining on a couch, holding in her hand a mirror. Afra is busy arranging her hair, and Graja her dress. Syra sits at a little distance embroidering. Fabiola wears a stiletto in the folds of her dress.*]

Afra. How delighted I should be, most noble mistress, if I could only be allowed to be here present this evening, to observe the brilliant effect of this new cosmetic on your hair! It has cost me many trials before I could get it perfect.

Graja. As for me, I should not presume to aspire to so high an honor. I should be satisfied to look from outside the door, and see the magnificent effect of this wonderful tunic. Nothing can equal its beauty.

Fabiola. And you, Syra, what would you desire? And what have you to praise of your own doing?

Syra. Nothing to desire, noble lady, but that you may be ever happy; and nothing to praise of my own doing, for I am not conscious of having done more than my duty.

Fabiola. Methinks, slave, that you are not over given to praise. One seldom hears a soft word from your mouth.

Syra. And what worth would it be from a poor servant to a noble dame, accustomed to hear it all day long

from eloquent and polished lips? But do you believe it when you hear it from them? Do you not rather despise it, because not always sincere?

Fabiola. (*Angrily.*) Have you yet to learn, then, that you are mine, and that you must serve me as I please? I have as good a right to the service of your tongue as of your arms. A new idea, indeed, that a slave has to have any will but that of her mistress, when her very life belongs to her!

Syra. True, my lady, my life belongs to you; and so does all else that ends with life—time, health, vigor, body and breath. All this you have bought with your gold, and it has become your property. But I still hold as my own what no Emperor's wealth can purchase, no chains of slavery fetter, no limits of life contain.

Fabiola. And what is that? (*Sneeringly.*)

Syra. A soul!

Fabiola. A soul!? (*Mockingly.*) And what do you mean by the word?

Syra. I mean that inward living consciousness within me, which makes me feel to have an existence among better things than surround me, which shrinks from destruction, which abhors from flattery and detests a lie.

Fabiola. Who has taught you to prate in this manner? Do you really fancy that when, after death, your corpse will be thrown on the heap of slaves, you will survive, and have still a life of joy and freedom?

Syra. I do, noble lady; and more yet, I believe that there is a Power that will cause the four winds of heaven to give back every grain of my dust; and I shall be built up again in this my very body; not, indeed, as it is now, but free and joyful and glorious, loving for ever and beloved. "This certain hope is laid up in my bosom."

Fabiola. In what school did you learn all this nonsense?

Syra. In a school in which there is no distinction between nation and nation, between freeman and slave.

Fabiola. What? without waiting for that future ideal existence after death, already, even now, you presume to claim equality with me? Come, tell me at once if you do so or not.

Syra. Most noble mistress, far superior are you in place, power, learning, genius, and in all that embellishes life, to one so lowly and insignificant as I. But if I must answer simple truth to your question....

Fabiola. Well, go on. (*Impatiently.*)

Syra. Well, I put it to your own judgment, whether a poor slave, who holds an unquenchable consciousness of possessing within her a living intelligence, whose measure of existence is immortality, whose only true place of dwelling is above the skies, whose only rightful prototype is the Deity, can hold herself inferior in moral dignity or lower in sphere of thought than one who, however gifted, owns that she claims no higher dignity, no sublimer end than that which awaits, for instance, yonder irrational songster, that beats, without hope of liberty, against the gilded bars of its cage.

Fabiola. Impertinent! (*She makes a blind thrust at Syra with the stiletto. Syra, putting forward her arms to save her person, receives therein the point.*) Go, go now; you need not return here again this evening.

[*Exit Syra and enter Agnes, who, meeting Syra at the door, kisses her wounds, which stains her dress with blood.*]

Agnes. (*To Syra.*) I have seen all. Meet me again when I go out. (*To Fabiola.*) Good evening, cousin.

Fabiola. Welcome, dear Agnes; it is really kind of you to come at my sudden request. The fact is, that my father has this evening some guests at supper, and he wishes to introduce some of them to you and me.

Agnes. My dear Fabiola, you know I am always happy to visit you; therefore don't make any apologies about that.

Fabiola. And so you have come to me, as usual, in your snow-white dress, without jewels or ornament.... but—good heavens! What is this? Are you hurt? It looks like blood! Let me change your dress.

Agnes. Not for the world, Fabiola; it is a true jewel, which I am exceedingly delighted to wear. It is blood, and blood of a slave; but nobler, in my eyes, than flows in your veins or mine.

Fabiola. Do you then wish to exhibit a proof to all the world of my hastiness of temper in over-chastening a forward slave?

Agnes. No, dear cousin: I only wish to preserve for myself a lesson of fortitude and of elevation of mind, such as few philosophers can teach us.

Fabiola. What a strange idea! Indeed, Agnes, I have often thought that you make too much of that class of people. After all, what are they?

Agnes. Human beings as much as ourselves; endowed with the same reason, the same feelings, the same organization. Then, they form part of the same family; and if God, from whom cometh our life, is thereby our father, he is theirs as much; consequently they are our brethren.

Fabiola. A slave my brother or sister? The gods forbid it!

Agnes. Come, come, do not let us get into a discussion. You are too candid and honorable not to feel that to-day you have been outdone by a slave in mind, in reasoning, in truthfulness and in fortitude. Do not answer me. I see it in that tear. Will you grant me, dear cousin, a request?

Fabiola. Any in my power.

Agnes. Allow me to purchase Syra. You will not like to see her about you any more, I guess.

Fabiola. You are mistaken, Agnes. I will master pride for once, and own that I shall now esteem her, perhaps admire her. It is a new feeling in me towards one of her station.

Agnes. But, perhaps, Fabiola, I could make her somewhat happier than she is.

Fabiola. No doubt, Agnes; you have the power of making every body happy about you. I never saw such a household as yours. Come, tell me your secret. I suspect, you little magician, possess some secret charm, by which you make every one love you. If you were a Christian, and were exposed in the amphitheatre, I am sure the very leopards would crouch and nestle at your feet—but why do you look so serious, child? You know I am only joking.

Agnes. Well, well, Fabiola; even such strange things may indeed come to pass. At any rate, if aught so dreadful had to happen, Syra would just be the sort of person one would like to see near one: so you really must let me have her.

Fabiola.—For heaven's sake, Agnes, do not take my words so seriously; they were spoken in jest. But as for Syra's devotedness you are right. When last summer I was dangerously ill of contagious fever, it required the lash to make the other slaves approach me; while that poor thing would hardly leave me day and night.

Agnes. And did you not love her for this?

Fabiola. Love her! love a slave, child! Of course I always take care to reward her; though I cannot make out what she does with what I give her. The others tell me she has nothing put by; and she certainly spends nothing on herself. Nay, I have heard she foolishly shares her daily allowance of food with a blind beggar girl.

Agnes. Dearest Fabiola, she must be mine! You promised me my request. Name your price, and let me take her home this evening.

Fabiola. Well, be it so, you most irresistible of petitioners. Send to-morrow some one to see my father's steward, and all will be right. I will now go down stairs and give some orders to my slaves. You please to stay here a little while.

[*Exit Fabiola.*]

Agnes. (*Alone.*) Now I must see Syra, and tell her the good news. Oh, she must decidedly be mine! Syra! (*calling,*) are you engaged? (*Enter Syra, leading by the hand Cecilia.*)

Syra. I was only putting some food in this my poor friend's basket.

Agnes. Oh, Cecilia, is it you? Ah, I know now your secret at last. This is the friend whose food you have always said was so sweet to you. And now, I am very glad to have you present, to hear the good news I bring to Syra. Fabiola has allowed me to become your mistress, Syra, and to take you home with me. To-morrow you shall be free, and a dear sister to me.

Cecilia. Oh, how good! How happy you will now be, dear Syra!

Syra. O good and gentle lady, you have been kind indeed to think so much about one like me. But pardon me if I entreat you to remain as I am.

Agnes. But why?

Syra. Because I think I can serve God better in this my present condition. I own this is not the one in which I was born; I have been brought to it by others. But so much the more clear is it to me that God has willed me to serve him in this condition. How can I wish to leave it?

Agnes. Well then, we can easily manage it. I will not free you; you shall be my bondswoman. That will be just the same.

Syra. No, no; that will never do. Our great Apostle's instructions to us are: "Servants, be subject to your masters, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward." I am far from saying that my mistress is one of these; but I know that you, noble Agnes, would be too good for me. Where would it be my cross if I lived with you?

Agnes. Well, Syra, if no motive addressed to your own interest can move you, I'll use a more selfish plea. I want to have you with me, that I may improve by your advice and example.

Syra. Selfish, lady, you can never be; therefore I will appeal to yourself from your request. You know Fabiola, and you love her. What a noble soul! What a splendid intellect! What great qualities and accomplishments, if they only reflected the light of truth! And how jealously does she guard in herself that pearl of virtues, which only *we* know how to prize! Oh, then, what a truly great Christian she would make!

Agnes. And do you hope for it?

Syra. It is my prayer day and night. It is, and will always be the occupation of my life. I will try to win her by patience, by assiduity, even by such unusual discussions as we have held to-day. And when all is exhausted I have one resource more.

Agnes and Cecilia. And what is that ?

Syra. To give my life for her conversion. I have placed my life in God's hand for her soul. Oh, dearest and best of ladies, do not come in thus between me and my prize !

Agnes. You have conquered, sister Syra. Oh never call me *lady* again ! Remain at your post ; such virtue must triumph.

Cecilia. And I say that she has said one very wicked thing, and told a great story just a while ago.

Syra. What is that, my pet ?

Cecilia. Why, you said that I was wiser and better than you. How could you tell me such a thing, while you give up liberty, happiness, the free exercise of religion and life itself, for the salvation of one who is your tyrant ?

Agnes. Well, well, I'll settle this pretty quarrel. The Lord said : "He is greater among you, that is meaner in his own estimation." Let us then vie with each other in humility. Now you may go, dear sisters.

Syra and Cecilia. The Lord be with you, Agnes.

[*Exeunt.*]

Agnes. And with your spirit.

[*Enter Fabiola.*]

Fabiola. My father and our visitors will come in presently, Agnes.

Agnes. But you have not put on all your usual jewels !

Fabiola. Never mind them : I feel no taste for them to-day.

Fabius. (*Outside, boisterously.*) Come in, come in, gentlemen.

[*Enter Fabius, then Fulvius and Corvinus, and, last, Tertullus and Sebastian.*]

Fabius. (*Pompously.*) My dear young ladies, I have the pleasure to introduce to you Master Corvinus, the worthy son of our illustrious Prefect Tertullus, who has honored us with his presence this evening, and Master Fulvius, who came lately from the East highly recommended to our Emperor for having discovered there a

conspiracy against his Divine Majesty. Two splendid matches (*laughs*) for the two noblest ladies in Rome ! You know already the valiant Captain of the Emperor's Guards, Sebastian.

[*He points out the several gentlemen according as he mentions them.*

The ladies bow civilly but coolly to Corvinus, Fulvius and Tertullus, and more courteously to Sebastian.]

Fabiola. I consider myself highly honored by this introduction to gentlemen so much esteemed by my revered father. Gentlemen, please be seated.

[*Sebastian goes towards Agnes, and sits near her, and Fabiola intentionally takes a chair, and goes to sit near him. Corvinus and Fulvius show disappointment.*]

Fabius. Our valorous Prefect has brought us, ladies, capital news ; the Thermœ of Dioclesian will be finished in three years Excellent waters for bathing there !

[*Rubs his hands.*

Fabiola.—I am always delighted with any thing that affords pleasure to my beloved father.

Tertullus. Several thousands of Christians will be set immediately to that work ; and they will soon bring it to an end. (*Sebastian and Agnes look at each other, smiling.*)

Fulvius. They were all implicated in the late conspiracy discovered by me.

Fabiola. But why will Christians do this work better than other criminals ?

Tertullus. Ordinary convicts naturally do not love their work, and they require the lash at every step to compel them to perform it ; then, they are generally rude, sottish and querulous. But the Christians, I do not know how, seem to work with joy, and they are ordinarily very tame : moreover, among them there are always many endowed with much skill and talent. Of course, for all that, the overseers apply the lash and the stick very freely to them. Such is the will of our divine Emperor, that their lot be made as hard as possible.

Fabiola. I cannot say that I admire this sort of justice.

Fulvius. Perhaps, madam, you have never heard of the horrible crimes of which the Christians are guilty.

Fabiola. Indeed I have not ; nor have I ever read their history either.

Tertullus. My son Corvinus, just come home from the best Academy of Athens, can tell you that history, Madam.

Fabius. Oh yes, tell us ; it must be very interesting.
[*Rubbing his hands.*]

Corvinus. (*He rises and bows to the company in a pompous but stupid way.*) Ladies and gentlemen, You must know that the Christians are a foreign sect, the founder of which flourished many years ago in Chaldea. His doctrines were brought to Rome at the time of Vespasian by two brothers named Peter and Paul. Some maintain that these were the same twin brothers whom the Jews call Moses and Aaron, the second of whom sold his birthright to his brother for a kid, the skin of which he wanted to make gloves of. But the identity I do not admit, as it is recorded in the mystical books of the Jews, that the second of these brothers, seeing the other's victims give better omens of bird than his own, slew him, as Romulus did Remus, but with the jaw-bone of an ass ; for which he was hung by King Mardocheus of Macedon, at the suit of their sister Judith. However, Peter and Paul coming, as I said, to Rome, the former was discovered to be a fugitive slave of Pontius Pilate, and was crucified by his master's orders. Their followers, of whom they had many, made the cross their symbol, and adore it ; and they think it the greatest honor to suffer stripes and even death, as the best means of being like their teachers, and, as they fancy, of going somewhere in the clouds.

Sebastian. (*Ironically.*) A very lucid explanation indeed of Christianity ! (*To Agnes.*) Shall I answer the goose ?

[*Agnes, putting her finger to her mouth, implores him to be silent.*]

Fulvius. But the worse about the Christians is, that they are the greatest enemies of the Roman empire.

[*Sebastian puts his hand on his sword ; but Agnes again wins him to keep quiet.*]

Corvinus. Ah! the scoundrels! They would fain destroy us all, if they could. (*Fabius shudders.*) Did they not burn Rome under Nero? And in what do you think their principal act of worship consists? In slaying a child and then eating its flesh and drinking its blood!

Fabiola and Fabius. Horrible!

[*Sebastian gives new signs of impatience.*]

Fulvius. Captain Sebastian (*sarcastically*) seems to think differently about these Christians.

Sebastian. Indeed, I think that if they really are such a foolish and wicked race as you have described them to be, they deserve to be exterminated. But, even so, I would give them at least one chance.

Fulvius. And what is that?

Sebastian. That no one be allowed to join in destroying them who could not prove himself freer from crime than they. I would have no one raise his hand against them, who cannot show that he has never been an extortioner, a deceiver, a drunkard, a profligate or a thief; for, of being any of these, no one charges the poor Christians.

Fulvius. (*Piqued.*) The Emperor will soon give them a better chance to clear themselves, there on the arena of the Ampitheatre. A brave soldier like you will be delighted to see their struggles with the wild beasts of the forest.

Sebastian. Fulvius, I should ill deserve the title you give me, could I contemplate with pleasure and in cold blood the struggle between a brute beast and a helpless child or woman; for, such are the spectacles of the Ampitheatre. I will draw my sword willingly against any enemy of the princes or of the empire; but I would as readily draw it against the lion or the leopard that should rush, even by imperial order, against the innocent and the defenceless.

Fabiola. The Captain is right, I think.

Agnes. (*To Fabiola.*) Cousin, you will never hear Sebastian speak, except to express generous and high-minded sentiments. But I feel fatigued; I would like to retire.

Fabiola. I too. (*To Fabius.*) Dear father, I do not feel quite well. I should like to retire earlier this evening

Fabius. Very well, very well. (*To the others.*) Come friends, let us to the baths.

Sebastian. Noble Fabius, excuse me this time; the duties of my office call me elsewhere.

[*Exit Fabiola, bowing coolly to the other gentlemen, but shaking hands warmly with Sebastian, and embracing Agnes affectionately.*

Exeunt Fabius, Tertullus, Corvinus and Fabius.]

Sebastian. (*To Agnes.*) How shocking, Agnes, to find even learned men believing at once every calumny, every fable, every fiction about us Christians, without ever thinking of examining whether they are true; just because they have made up their minds that we must be all that is low, wicked and detestable!

Agnes. True, Sebastian; but we must remember that our blessed Redeemer has not been better treated by men than we are.

Sebastian. Thank you, Agnes, for your just remark. God be with you.

Agnes. And with your spirit. (*Exeunt. Curtain falls.*)

ACT II.

SCENE I. . . THE FORUM.

[*A board is seen hanging at the Pretorium, with traces of a writing, now torn, which contained the imperial decree of persecution against the Christians.*

Enter Fulvius, dragging forcibly by the arm Torquatus, who has no hat, and bears signs of recent revelry and drunkenness.]

Torquatus. Now, what do you want with me? Let me go. Are you not satisfied with having got all my money?

Fulvius. Ah yes, I have got it, and in a lawful game. Here it is! (*Takes purse from his pocket and makes the coin jingle to Torquatus' ear.*) And, you see, you are now a beggar, a ruined gamester. But it is to tell

you something else that I have taken you here apart. Do you see there (*pointing back to the board*) that imperial edict of persecution against the Christians, which will be a law for the whole empire from to-morrow's daylight?

Torquatus. I see no decree there. But what with that?

Fulvius. Are you not a Christian?

Torquatus. No, no! (*in despair.*)

Fulvius. (*Laughing sarcastically.*) You may as well say so, after your conduct to-night at the gambling house. But you are a Christian nevertheless; in your drunkenness you have told us all; only you are now degraded; you have disgraced your religion, and betrayed it too.

Torquatus. (*With anguish.*) Ah! they will forgive me still. God...

Fulvius. Silence! Utter not that name, hypocrite.

Torquatus. But why do you torment me thus? If all that you say is true, what is it to you?

Fulvius. A great deal, sir. Do you not see that you have betrayed yourself into my power completely? I am master of your money, of your character, of your life. I have only to let your fellow Christians know what you have done, what you have said, what you have been to-night in our company, and you dare no more face them. I have only to let that "bully," that "big brute," as you called Corvinus at the gambling table—but who is the son of the Prefect of Rome—loose upon you (and no one else can now restrain him after such provocation) and to-morrow you will be standing before his father's tribunal to die for that religion you have disgraced, and just now denied to me. Are you ready now to reel and stagger as a drunken gambler, to represent your Christianity before the judgment seat in this forum?... (*Silence.*) Well, have you made your choice, either to go at once to the Christians with to-night on your head, or to-morrow to the Court? Which do you choose?

Torquatus. (*Imploringly.*) Oh neither!

Fulvius. Come then, what will you do?

Torquatus. What you like, only neither of those two things.

Fulvius. (*Soothingly.*) Now, *Torquatus*, listen to me; do as I tell you, and all is mended. You shall have house, and food, and apparel, and money too, if you will only do my bidding.

Torquatus. And what is that?

Fulvius. You must answer truth to my questions; then, put on your Christian face, and do what I tell you.

Torquatus. (*In great anguish.*) Oh! a traitor at last!

Fulvius. Call it what you wish: that or death!.... I hear some one coming....quick: which is to be?

Torquatus. (*Cowardly.*) Not death! any thing else?

Fulvius. When are the Christians to have one of their solemn meetings?

Torquatus. The day after to-morrow, at day-break.

Fulvius. Where? (*Torquatus hesitates.*) Where? I say.

Torquatus. In a subterranean cemetery, near *Via Appia*.

Fulvius. Now, the day after to-morrow (*emphatically*) at day-break, thou shalt lead me and a few other gentlemen thither. Agreed?

Torquatus. Agreed.

Fulvius. Here is some of your money (*give it*): You shall have more if all is right: but remember to put on your Christian face well.

[*Exit Torquatus.*]

Fulvius. (*Alone.*) What a good luck I had in meeting this fellow at the gambling house!.. Now, (*musings*).. Ah! it is the very High Priest of these Christians I shall pounce upon there; or, at any rate, I shall surely catch some fat one among them; thus, half my fortune will be made. As to *Agnes*, if she is really a Christian, as the report is, I will find her there: and, either she consents to be mine, or I will accuse her and get her confiscated

property. And now (*musings again*,) let me see...yes... I hear she is at her villa. I will go this very morning there, and try my chance with her. Who knows but I may win her? O Haides, speed me! (*Exit*.)

[*Enter Corvinus, accompanied by some soldiers.*]

Corvinus. [*Finding the sentinel asleep.*] Oh! oh! sleeping, sentinel? [*Awakes him.*] But...[*perceiving the edict torn away*] what? the edict torn away? Ohe! sirrah! [*Shaking him by the arm.*] How has that document disappeared?

Soldier. Softly, softly, sir; is it not there where you left it in my charge?

Corvinus. Where, you fool? Look!

Soldier. [*Looking stupidly to the board.*] Well, is not that the board you hung up last night?

Corvinus. Yes, you blockhead; but there was writing on it, which is gone. That is what you had to guard.

Soldier. Why, look you, Captain, as to writing, you see, I know nothing, having never been a scholar.

Corvinus. Come, come; this is no joking matter. Tell me at once who came here last night?

Soldier. Why, two of them came.

Corvinus. Two of what?

Soldier. Two wizards, or goblins, or worse.

Corvinus. None of that nonsense for me. Tell me what sort of people were they, and what did they?

Soldier. One of them was but a stripling, a boy, tall and thin, and went around, and, I suppose, took away what you miss, while I was busy with the other.

Corvinus. And what of him? What was he like?

Soldier. Why, if he was not the head-goblin itself, he wasn't far from it. I never felt such strength.

Corvinus. What did he do to show it?

Soldier. He came up first, and began to chat quite friendly, when I remembered that I had to run through any one that came near me..

Corvinus. Exactly: but why did you not do it?

Soldier. He wouldn't let me. I told him to be off, or I should spear him, and I drew back and stretched my

javelin; when, in the quietest manner, I don't know how, he twisted it out of my hand, broke it over his knee, and dashed the pieces fifty yards off.

Corvinus. Then why did you not rush on him with your sword?.. But, I see, you have no sword! Where is it?

Soldier. There; don't you see it shining on the tiles of the pretorium?

Corvinus. How did it get there?

Soldier. He, or it, whatever it was, whisked it out of my hand, and up..where you see it, as if it had been a play ball.

Corvinus. And then?

Soldier. And then, he and the boy, who came back just at the moment, walked off in the dark.

Corvinus. [*To himself.*] Oh! surely, they were two Christians! [*To the soldier.*] But why did you not give the alarm, and rouse the other guards to pursuit?

Soldier. First, Master Kor..Korn..winer, because in my country we never pursue hobgoblins; secondly, what was the use? I saw that the board you gave into my care, was there safe and sound..

Corvinus. Stupid barbarian! This business will go hard with you. It is a capital offence. You will have to answer to the Emperor for it.

Soldier. [*With a look of sly stolidity.*] Look you now, sir; as to that, we are pretty well in the same boat. You must contrive some way of saving me, if you want to save yourself.

Corvinus. Oh rage! Well, [*softening*] I must make it out that a strong body of those savage Christians attacked you and killed you at your post. So, you go; shut yourselves up in the quarters for a few days.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE II. AGNES' VILLA. GARDEN.

[*Agnes carries a wreath of flowers, and a basket half full of flowers.*]

[*Enter Agnes and Syra.*]

Agnes. Welcome, Syra, to my Villa. Is Fabiola coming?

Syra. She is. She was to leave home soon after myself.

Agnes. Please, then, to go and prepare her room; and when she comes, call me. I will finish my little collection of flowers, to make wreaths for our consecration of to-morrow.

[*Exit Syra. Enter Fulvius from the opposite side. Agnes starts when she perceives his presence.*]

Fulvius. Excuse my intrusion, fair lady. I came for a ride out of the Nomentan gate, and, when I found myself near your villa, I could not but dismount and call, in order to renew to you the expression of my sincere regard. (*A short silence.*) What a bright and fair day! Isn't it, my lady?

Agnes. Fair, indeed, and bright it is to me; and the sun will give me, I hope, one more fair still.

Fulvius. The day, I suppose you mean, of your espousals with one who may have won your heart.

Agnes. Oh yes!

Agnes. And was that wreath woven in anticipation of such a happy hour?

Agnes. Oh! it is the sign my beloved will place upon my countenance that I may recognize no lover but himself.

Fulvius. And who is this happy being? I was not without hopes, nor will I renounce them yet, that I have a place in your thoughts, perhaps in your affections.

Agnes. He, whose beauty sun and moon in their lofty firmament gaze on and admire, to him, to him alone is pledged my love.

Fulvius. But, Madam, you are trifling with one who sincerely admires and loves you. I sincerely and earnestly solicit your hand. I may seem abrupt and informal; but I am sincere. [*He drops on his knees before her.*]

Agnes. Begone, begone from me, food of corruption; already a lover has secured by heart, whose love is chaste, whose caress is pure, whose brides never put off their original wreaths.

Fulvius. (*Rising up with spite and fury*) Is it not enough to be rejected, but must insult be heaped on me

too? And must I be told to my face that another has been before me?

[*Enter Fabiola, suddenly.*]

Fabiola. Who are you that dare thus to intrude upon the privacy of my kinswoman's rural retreat?

Fulvius. And who are you who take upon yourself to be imperious mistress in another's house?

Fabiola. One who feels herself bound in honor and duty to shield her cousin from your wicked designs. (*She takes Agnes by the hand and leads her away.*) Come, Agnes, and let him there a prey to his disappointment.

Fulvius. (*Gnashing his teeth and muttering audibly.*) Haughty Roman dame! Thou shalt bitterly rue this day and hour.

ACT III.

THE PERSECUTION.

SCENE, THE CATACOMBS.

[*Enter procession of Christians, Virgins already consecrated, Clergy, Dyonysius and his Deacon, and at last Agnes and Syra, who carry each a wreath of flowers and a white veil. The chant of Jesu Corona Virginum is heard before the procession comes out, and continues till all have taken their respective places. Agnes and Syra place themselves before the platform on which Dyonysius stands.*]

Dyonysius. Brethren, some young women desire to join the Chorus of our holy virgins.

The Crowd. Thanks be to God!

Dyonysius. O how high a calling is theirs! To lead on earth the life of angels! To tread the same chaste path to Heaven which the incarnate Son of God chose for Himself and for His own Mother! To be received into the pure ranks of the host "that follows the Lamb whithersoever he goeth." But, that you all, and especially these good virgins, may better appreciate their holy state of life, my Deacon will read you the instructions which the great Apostle St. Paul left to us on this subject in the 7th chapter of his Epistle to the Corinthians.

Deacon. (Reading.) "Concerning virgins, I have no commandment of the Lord; but I give counsel as having obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful. I think, therefore, that it is good so to be. I would have you to be without solicitude. He that is with a wife is solicitous for the things of the world, and he is divided; and she that is married, thinketh on the things of the world. But the unmarried and the virgin thinketh of the things of the Lord.

And this I speak for your profit; not to cast a snare upon you; but that you may have power to attend upon the Lord without impediment.

Therefore he that giveth his virgin in marriage doeth well; and he that giveth her not doeth better, according to my counsel: and I think that I have the spirit of God."

Dyonysius. Now, my daughters, (*addressing Agnes and Syra*) declare what you ask from the Church of God.

Agnes and Syra. [Kneeling before the Priest] Father, we ask the sacred veil; because we intend, with the help of God, to choose for our only and eternal spouse our Savior, his Divine Son, and embrace the state of virginity.

Dyonysius. Thanks be to God!

The Whole Crowd.—Thanks be to God!

Dyonysius. And may the grace of God assist you to fulfil your engagement faithfully to the end of your lives! [*Putting the veil on them.*] And let this veil be an emblem of that modesty which you must observe, in order that you may preserve unsullied the purity of your life. [*Putting the wreath of flowers on their heads.*] And may your life, like these pure and unspotted flowers, be, as the Apostle Paul recommends, "good odour of Christ."

Agnes and Syra. Amen. [*Withdrawing. When Cecilia arrives in a hurry.*

Cecilia, [Seizing each of them by the hand, and throwing herself down at the feet of the priest.] Holy Father, I also wish to receive the veil of consecration, under the care of these two holy virgins. [*Agnes and Syra look surprised and overwhelmed with joy and tenderness.*]

Dyonysius. Thanks be to God! [*Etc., etc. as before ; when he is about putting on the wreath, seeing that she has none.*] Have you not brought the wreath of flowers?

Cecilia. I had not at hand any flowers; but my divine Bridegroom had not any either. I am but a poor girl; and I hope my Lord will not be offended if I ask Him to crown me, as He was pleased to be crowned himself, with a crown of thorns. [*She shows from under her handkerchief the crown of thorns ; Agnes and Syra try to take from her the crown, and to put on her head their own wreath, but the priest checks them.*]

Dyonysius. Let it be so. [*Putting the crown upon her head.*] And may this crown be a sign that thou wilt try to resemble in purity and, if necessary, in suffering, thy Divine Spouse!

The Crowd. Amen.

Sebastian. [*Rushes in with great haste.*] Disperse, brethren, as quick as possible. Fulvius, led by Torquatus, who has turned a traitor, is coming with a strong body of soldiers to seize upon you.

The Crowd. The will of God be done!

Dyonysius. Let us all, then, in good order, get out through the secret outlet behind, which you all know.

Sebastian. I volunteer to be the last, and to let down the trap door, when you are all out.

Cecilia. And I, to hold the lantern. You know I need no light.

Dyonysius. [*Gives lantern to Cecilia.*] Put out all tapers now: and may God speed us!

[*Exeunt, Cecilia preceding with lantern.*]

Fulvius [*Outside.*] Go on, my fellows, don't fear.

[*Enter soldiers cautiously and timidly. Torquatus precedes them, holding a lighted torch.*]

One Soldier. I don't like this underground work. I am a soldier, and not a rat-catcher. Bring me my man into the light of day, and I will fight him hand to hand, and foot to foot; but I have no love for being stifled or poisoned, like vermin in a drain.

Another soldier. There may be hundreds of these skulking Christians down here, and we are only half a dozen.

Another. This is not the sort of work we receive our pay for.

Another. It's their sorceries I care for, and not their valor.

Corvinus. Don't fear, I tell you. These cowardly Christians will run before you like hares. Then, you will find in their Church more gold and silver than a year's pay will give you. Go on..

[They advance inside. Torquatus stops at the entrance, as it were, of the corridor, into which the soldiers venture. Suddenly the noise is heard of the trap door closing at a distance. The soldiers, frightened at it and at the sudden appearance of Cecilia, take to flight backward, saying :]

All the soldiers. *[Confusedly.]* A sorceress! a spirit! quick! away!

Corvinus. *[To Cecilia.]* Who are you?

Cecilia. A Christian!

Fulvius. Where are the others?

Cecilia. They are safe!

Fulvius. Agnes too?

Cecilia. Yes, thank God!

Fulvius. O rage! But now she can no more escape me. In a few hours she will be in prison. What were you now doing?

Cecilia. Guiding my friends out to safety.

Fulvius. Well, look at me, woman, and tell me the truth.

Cecilia. I must tell you the truth without looking at you, sir; because I am blind.

Fulvius. Blind! How long have you been blind?

Cecilia. All my life.

*Fulvius.** What is your history?

Cecilia. I have no history. My parents were poor, and brought me to Rome when I was four years old, as they came to pray at the tomb of the Blessed Martyr Chrysantus and Daria. It was on that memorable day, when many Christians were buried at that tomb by earth and stones cast down on them by the heathens. My parents had the happiness to be among them.

Fulvius. And how have you lived since?

Cecilia. God became my only father, and his Church my mother.

Fulvius. Well, well: [*impatient, shaking her arm in his grasp.*] Do you know now whither you must go?

Cecilia. To my spouse in heaven, I hope; because you seem to be one of those who came here to take the Christians before the judge. He will condemn me to death, I suppose.

Fulvius. And you say that so calmly?

Cecilia. Quite joyfully.

[*Enter Tertullus with soldiers.*]

Tertullus. Well, Fulvius, have you caught any?

Fulvius. But one at present—this blind girl. But I discovered enough to compensate our present failure. I lay now before you the accusation, claiming my right to the spoil. Lady Agnes is a Christian.

Tertullus. Is she? Well, Claudius, [*to one of the soldiers*] go directly, take hold of her, and put her safe in the Mamestine prison. [*The soldier goes*] As for this insignificant game [*Cecilia,*] it would be ridiculous to march through the city guarding her. We can try her here, and get rid of her at once.

Fulvius. She is at your disposal. If you have no objection, I will go and see that Agnes be duly secured.

Tertullus. Well. [*Exit Fulvius.*] What is thy name, child? [*To Cecilia.*]

Cecilia. Cecilia.

Tertullus. It is a noble name.

Cecilia. I am not noble; except because my parents, though poor, died for Christ. As I am blind, those who took care of me, called me with the Latin word *Cæca*, and then, out of kindness, they softened it into Cecilia.

Tertullus. But now, give up all this folly of the Christians. Honor the decrees of the Divine Emperor, and offer sacrifices to the gods; and thou shalt have riches and fine clothes, and good fare; and the best physicians shall try to restore thee thy sight.

Cecilia. I thank God that I am poor and meanly clad, and fare not daintily, because so I am the more like my divine spouse.

Tertullus. Foolish girl! Come; let me have no more of this silly prattle. Obey the Emperor at once, or I must try what a little pain will do. That will soon tame thee.

Cecilia. Pains!? Neither torments, nor death shall separate me from the love of Christ. I can offer up no sacrifices but to the one living God; and its ready oblation is myself!

Tertullus. Soldiers, drag her out in that corridor, and despatch her at once. [*They do so.*]

Cecilia. [*While she is dragged away.*] Thank God!

Sebastian. [*From inside.*] Impious tyrant! A poor blind Christian girl has more power over life and death than thou or thy cruel masters.

Tertullus. [*Looking around with surprise and rage.*] Who dares to speak so?

Sebastian. [*Appearing.*] I.

Tertullus. You, Captain, you turned a traitor—a Christian, perhaps?

Sebastian. Yes, I am a Christian; but not a traitor.

Tertullus. How do you prove that?

Sebastian. What could have prevented me at any time from *acting* the traitor, if I had been one? Have I not had access to the Emperor's person by night as by day; and have I proved a traitor? No, sir, none has ever been more faithful than I to his Majesty or to the State. But I have another and a higher Lord to serve at the same time; one who will judge us all; and His laws I must obey rather than the Emperor's, when they conflict together.

Tertullus. And why have you, like a coward, concealed your religion? To escape, I suppose, the bitter death you deserved?

Sebastian. No, sir; no more coward than traitor. So long as I could do any good to my brethren, I did not refuse to live amidst their carnage and my affliction, fulfilling at the same time faithfully all the duties of my office, compatible with my religious belief. But now, that your precipitate incursion did not allow me sufficient

time to place in safety my fellow Christians, without letting the door, through which they went out, fall on myself, beyond hope of escape, I am ready to die, if necessary; and I thank you and Fulvius for the opportunity you procured to me of joining in the same glorious death this heroic maiden, whom I imitated in the sacrifice made for the salvation of others.

Tertullus. Well, you will be satisfied, if death is what you want; but, not like this silly thing, you shall die a slow, lingering death. Such is the order of the Emperor in regard to criminals of your degree of guilt.

Sebastian. Thank you, I repeat; and to the Emperor!

Tertullus. Soldiers, you will take Sebastian to your quarters; and early in the morning, when your hands are steady, you will tie him to a tree in the grove of Adonis, and you will *slowly* shoot him to death. *Slowly*, mind. Now take him off carefully.

Sebastian. I will not run away; you need not fear that. I will go of my own accord to the place of execution, and kiss the blessed tree, and welcome every arrow.

Tertullus. [*Sneeringly.*] We'll see. [*Exeunt. Curtain drops*]

ACT IV!

PERSECUTION STILL.

SCENE I. FABIOLA'S ROOM.

[*Fabiola and Syra sitting. Fabiola holds a piece of parchment.*]

Fabiola. I must show you, Syra, a strange writing I found the other day at lady Agnes' villa, among her books. It puzzled me greatly ever since. [*Syra, after looking at the writing, rises up and kisses it.*] Now, now, Syra, what are you doing?

Syra. Permit me to stand, my lady, when I read this.

Fabiola. How many little fancies you have! Well, read on.

Syra. [*Reading.*] "I say to you: love your enemies; do good to them that hate you, and pray for them

that persecute and calumniate you ; that you may be the children of your Father who is in heaven, who maketh his sun rise on the good and the bad, and raineth upon the just and the unjust." Mat. 3:14. [*Syra gives back the parchment to Fabiola*] It seems to me quite plain, all this, my dear Mistress.

Fabiola. [*Disappointed.*] Yes : but that very plainness gives me trouble. My natural feelings revolt against this sentiment. To forgive, at most, would be much ; but to do good in return for evil, seems to me an unnatural exaction from human nature. Yet, while I feel all this, I am conscious that I have been brought to esteem you for having practised quite the reverse of what I am naturally impelled to expect

Syra. Oh ! Do not talk of me, pray ; but look at the simple principle. You honor it in others, you say ; then it must contain a great truth.

Fabiola. Do you, then, mean to say, that we must hold this truth as a common moral principle ?

Syra. Of course, I do.

Fabiola. That is sublime ! I own it. And I understand also that, when one acts so, one often finds in his very action his reward ; for, the world will praise him as a hero, and his act is recorded and handed down as memorable to the posterity. But what enticement has *he* so to act, who in humble secrecy performs such a noble action ?

Syra. [*Rising up and with enthusiasm*] His Father, who is in heaven, sees him and will requite him. You had it in that writing already.

Fabiola. Again, Syra, you have conquered my philosophy. But, do you believe, after all (*smiling*) in Jupiter, Juno, Minerva and the like ? Or can you really suppose that they have anything to do with our affairs ?

Syra. Far indeed from it. I loath their very names. No, I spoke not of gods and goddesses, but of *one only* God.

Fabiola. And what do you call him in your system ?

Syra. He has no name but *God* ; and men have given him that name, that they may speak of him ; but it describes not his nature, nor his qualities.

Fabiola. And what are these ?

Syra. Simple as light in his nature, one and the same every where, He existed before there was any beginning, and will exist when all else has ceased to be.—Power, wisdom, goodness, love, justice belong to Him. He alone sees every action, thought or affection ; he alone can, and *will*, reward or punish.

Fabiola. But, *Syra*, can you think that a Being, such as you have described, can occupy himself watching the actions, still more, the paltry thoughts of millions of creatures ?

Syra. This is no occupation for Him ; it is not even choice. I called Him light. Is it occupation to the sun to send his rays through the crystal of a fountain, and to the very pebbles in its bed ? Were the sun to restrain his beams at the surface of the transparent element and hold them back, would it not be a violence unnatural to him ? And what he does in one, he does in the next stream, and in that which is a thousand miles off, with equal ease, nay out of a natural necessity. . Say the same of God, my lady.

Fabiola. (*Overwhelmed*) Your theories are beautiful indeed ; and sound like truth. But, (*putting her hands to her face in awe*) what an awful idea, that one has never been, and never is alone—has never had a wish to oneself—has never had a single thought in secret—has never hidden the most foolish fancy of a proud or childish brain, from the observation of One who knows no imperfection !. . Yet, I repeat, it sounds like truth !. . Ah ! *Syra*, I guess I have not reached the depth of your knowledge (*a tear and blush*) . . But, no doubt, you have to-day opened a new world to my thoughts—a sphere of virtue beyond the opinions and judgment of men—a consciousness of a controlling Power, standing by us when no other eye can see—a feeling that, were we shut up for ever in solitude, we should be ever the same !. . Such, if I understand it well, is the consequence of your doctrine : Is it ?

Syra. O my dear mistress, it is.

Fabiola. And was it all this that you meant when

once you told me that, in your theory, there was no distinction between mistress and slave? That is, that such a distinction is only outward, social, bodily; but that a perfect equality exists before the Supreme Being; and that the only distinction consists in the different moral and inward merit that this Being may see in every individual?

Syra. About so, my noble lady.

Fabiola. And yet, when you spoke so, it seemed to me so absurd, that pride and anger overcame me! (*affected.*) Do you remember that, Syra?

Syra. Oh no, no. Do not allude to it, pray.

Fabiola. Have you forgiven me that day, dear? (*Embracing her.*)

Syra. Oh! yes, yes. (*Sobbing.*)

[*A knock at the door. Enter Graja hastily, with a letter.*]

Graja. Excuse, Madam.

Fabiola. A letter? (*Opens it and reads.*) What? Agnes in prison? and accused by Fulvius?... Oh! I'll soon settle the matter. Ah! Fulvius, miserable wretch! [*Exeunt.*]

SCENE II. . . . PRISON.

Agnes (*Alone*) My prayer has been heard at last! Soon I shall behold my Beloved "face to face as he is." Oh bliss! oh happy day!.. (*Fulvius appears, and bows to Agnes, who stares at him calm and intrepid.*) You again? Respect me here at least, sir. I have but a few hours to live: let them be spent in peace.

Fulvius. Madam, I have come to lengthen them, if you please, to years.

Agnes. Surely, if I understand you, the time is past for this sad vanity. Thus to address one whom you have delivered over to death, is, at best, a mockery.

Fulvius. It is not so, gentle lady. Your fate is in your own hands; and only your own obstinacy can give you over to death. I have come to renew, once more, my offer, and with it that of life. It is your last chance.

Agnes. Have I not before told you that I am a Christian, and that I would forfeit a thousand lives rather than betray my faith?

Fulvius. But I do not ask you to do this; consent to fly with me; and, notwithstanding what has happened, you can be a Christian and yet live.

Agnes. But have I not also plainly told you that I am already espoused to my Lord and Savior, and that to him alone I keep eternal faith? Cease, therefore, this unworthy importunity, and leave me the last privilege of the condemned—solitude.

Fulvius (Angrily.) Wretched woman, I give thee one more opportunity of rescuing thyself from destruction. Say, then, which wilt thou have, life with me, or death?

Fabiola. (Appearing suddenly.) Death, even I, would choose with her, rather than life with a monster like thee!

Fulvius. She shall have it; (*Clenches his fist, and darts a mad look towards Fabiola.*) and thou too, if again thou darest to fling thy baneful shadow across my path. (*Exit.*)

Fabiola. (To Agnes.) Now, Agnes, what does all this mean? Is all the charge which this scoundrel has trumped up against you, that you are a Christian? (*She laughs.*) I will go myself to Tertullus and confute it in five minutes.

Agnes. But Fabiola, I am really a Christian!

Fabiola. (In great astonishment.) You?..(*to herself.*) Agnes a Christian! And so Syra, it appears! and with those sublime doctrines I have just learned from her!.. Oh! this is more than I can bear!..(*To Agnes.*) But how long, Agnes, have you been a Christian?

Agnes. All my life: I sucked the faith, as we say, with my mother's milk.

Fabiola. And why did you conceal it from me?

Agnes. Because I saw your violent prejudices against us; how you abhorred us as practicers of the most ridiculous superstitions, as perpetrators of the most odious abominations. I perceived how you contemned us as un-intellectual, uneducated, unphilosophical and unreasonable. You would not hear a word about us; and the only object of hatred to your generous mind was the name of Christian.

Fabiola. True, dearest Agnes; yet I think had, I known that you were a Christian, I could not have hated it; I could have loved any thing in you.

Agnes. You think so now, *Fabiola*: but you know not the force of universal prejudice, the weight of falsehood daily repeated. How many noble minds, fine intellects and loving hearts are thus enslaved, and induced to believe us to be all that we are not, something even worse than the worst of all others!

Fabiola. Well, *Agnes*, it is selfish in me to argue thus with you in your present position. You will, of course, compel *Fulvius* to prove that you are a Christian.

Agnes. Oh no, dear *Fabiola*; I have already confessed it, and intend to do so again, I think, after a little while.

Fabiola. What! so soon?

Agnes. Yes, *Fabiola*. To prevent any clamor or disturbance, I hear I am to be interrogated early, and that summary proceedings will be taken. Is not that good news, dear?.. Behold, what I have long wished I already see; what I hoped for I hold safe; to Him alone I feel already associated in heaven, whom here on earth I have loved with all devotedness. Oh, how beautiful he is, *Fabiola*! Lovlier than the angels that surround him! sweet his smile—mild his look—bland the whole expression of his countenance. Oh, I see him and his most gracious mother, and the whole heavenly host winningly beckoning me to go to them.. I come, I come.. Oh could you come too, *Fabiola*! Dear cousin, (*takes one of Fabiola's hands in her own, and crosses them upon her bosom, looking into her face,*) I have one dying request to make you.

Fabiola. (*Almost crying.*) Speak not thus to me, dearest *Agnes*; you must not request, but command me now.

Agnes. Then promise me that you will apply your mind to master the doctrines of Christianity. I know you will embrace them; if you only do that. Oh, what a glorious being Christianity will make of you, *Fabiola*!

Fabiola. I will, *Agnes*. Oh that you were not leav-

ing me thus outside its very threshold! (*A noise is heard.*)

Agnes. Hark! They come, they come! Don't you hear the measured tramp of the soldiers in the gallery? They are the Bridesmen coming to summon me. Farewell, Fabiola! Weep not for me. O that I could make you feel, as I do, the happiness of dying for Christ! And now I will speak a word to you which I never have addressed to you before—God bless you! (*She makes the sign of the cross on Fabiola's forehead. They embrace each other—The soldiers appear—Fabiola, sobbing, hastens away.*)

Tertullus.—What! is she unfettered?

A Soldier. She does not need it: she walks so readily—and she is so young. (*Wickedly.*)

Tertullus. But she is as obstinate as the oldest. Put manacles on her hands at once.

A soldier. (*Doing so.*) One so young ought to wear other bracelets.

Tertullus. Silence man, obey. (*to Agnes*) Agnes, I pity thy youth, thy station, and the bad education thou hast received. I desire, if possible, to save thee. Renounce the false and pernicious maxims of Christianity; obey the Emperor's edicts; and sacrifice to the gods.

Agnes.—It is useless to tempt me longer. My resolution is unalterable. I despise thy false divinities, and can only love and serve the One living God. Blessed Christ, call to thee the soul that cleaveth unto Thee—victim first to Thee by virginal consecration, now to Thy Father by martyrdom's immolation.

Tertullus. I waste time, I see. (*Impatiently.*) We condemn Agnes for contempt of the Imperial edicts, to be punished with the sword.

Soldier. Where, sir?

Tertullus. Here, at once.

Agnes. Thanks be to God! (*She raises her hands and eyes to heaven. She then calmly kneels down, draws forward with her hands her hair over her head, and exposes her neck to the blow. The executioner trembles with emotion, and cannot wield his sword. When at*

last he has done so, he still hesitates, and passes the back of his left hand across his eyes, and wipes a tear—)

Tertullus. Now, now, soldier, a tear? Art thou mad? Strike, or ...

[The executioner grasps Agnes' head, bends it to one side, and raises the sword to strike the blow, when the curtain drops.]

ACT V.

CONVERSION.

SCENE. FABIOLA'S RECEPTION ROOM.

Graja. (To *Corvinus*.) I have delivered your message to my mistress, sir. She will come in presently
(*Exit.*)

Corvinus. (When *Fabiola* enters.) Madam, the Emperor has conferred on me the honor of coming to you as a messenger from his imperial majesty.

Fabiola. (Dry.) What does the Emperor want from me?

Corvinus. We felt very much for you at seeing how extremely sorry you appeared to be for your unfortunate cousin's sad fate: and, thinking that it would be some compensation for the loss of her person, if you should get the peaceful possession of her inheritance, which some wicked persons expected to get for themselves after its confiscation, we, my father and your humble servant, (*bowing*) obtained from the Emperor a rescript, (*hands it over to Fabiola, who throws it carelessly on a chair,*) by which lady Agnes' property is assigned to you unmo-
lest. I hope, Madam, you will consider this good office as a new token of my affection for you, and kindly reward it with your own.

Fabiola. That was unnecessary, sir. That property was settled on me long ago; and I could in no way forfeit it. I am no Christian, as you know. Yet, let it be so now; and if you have any claim to my recompense, I will see to it in a more favorable moment. I am just now too wearied and unwell: so, I must beg you to leave me at present.

Corvinus. I shall respect your feelings, my lady, and withdraw; but with the consoling hope that you will soon receive me again.

Fabiola. (*Turns her back to him and calls Graja.*) Graja, show this gentleman off. (*When alone.*) Horrid monster! . . . And he dares to aspire to my hand! (*Laughing scornfully.*) What a difference (*turning serious, and plunging herself in her couch*) between such kind of people and Sebastian—the noblest, the purest, the bravest of Rome's nobility! (*Pleased.*) Was it not extremely delicate on his part never to make the least advance, although he could not but know that he might have had my hand and fortune for the asking? But lo! that he has gone too [*Thoughtful.*] Alas! he too was a Christian. . . But is it not very strange that every one I have known to be endowed with superior excellence—Agnes, Sebastian, Syra—turn out to belong to that scorned race: whilst, if I look around upon the rest—Tertullus, Corvinus, Fulvius, the Emperor himself—it sickens me (*rising up and pacing the floor with indignation*) to see quite a contrast of baseness, of vice, of stupidity.

Fulvius. (*Who appeared at the door when Fabiola was uttering the last sentence.*) Pray Madam, (*ironically,*) who are the men whom you honor by that gracious speech?

Fabiola. You are one—you, a further intruder, even into the most secret apartments of a young lady's residence. Begone at once, or I will have you ignominiously expelled hence.

Fulvius. Sit down, and compose yourself, lady. This is my last visit to you; we have a reckoning to make together of some weight. As to calling out or bringing in help, you need not trouble yourself. I have seen that none be within call. (*Fabiola sinks herself down in her couch with despair. Fulvius takes a chair and sits opposite to her and continues:*) Now repress your indignation, lady. I will be heard out. You undermined my character, you poisoned my love. . .

Fabiola. Your love? (*Mockingly.*)

Fulvius. Yes, my love for Agnes....

Fabiola. Insolent man! That very name on your lips sounds like blasphemy. And as for your pretended love, no, it deserves no such name. It was wealth that you grasped at and nothing more. What love can there be in one who is equally ready to espouse or to murder the object of his affection? Begone (*rising up*) from my presence; you taint the very atmosphere in which you move. At any rate I will depart from this offensive intrusion.

Fulvius. (*Hastily grasping her arm and pushing her back to the seat.*) We part not yet, lady, and beware how you attempt either to escape or to bring aid. Your first cry will be your last, cost me what it may.. You have made me a houseless wanderer: you robbed me of my gold.

Fabiola. What! dare you, in my own house, call me a thief?

Fulvius. I dare; and I tell you this is your day of reckoning. I have earned, even if by crime, it is nothing to you, my full share of your cousin's property; I have a right to enjoy it. Call it what you will; call it my blood-money; but you had no business to step in and snatch it from me.

Fabiola. (*Soothingly.*) Fulvius, I entreat you to go. If you want money, you shall have it; but go, in heaven's name, go. My cousin's property naturally became mine the moment it ceased to be hers; and the Emperor's rescript, granting it to me, was obtained by some uncalled for friend, but it was unnecessary.

Fulvius. No; you endeavor in vain to make me believe all that. You have out-plotted me; and now you offer me money—alms out of my own wages.

Fabiola. Your anger destroys your reason, Fulvius. [*She rises again, but he seizes her with a maniac's gripe.*]

Fulvius. No. Give me back that property. Transfer it by your sign to me as a free gift, and I will depart. If not, you have signed your own doom.

Fabiola. (*Haughtily.*) Fulvius, listen to my words, though they should be the last that I may speak. If

you want money from me, I'll give; but surrender to you my cousin Agnes' (*she bows respectfully*) property, no, I will not, I shall not. I would rather give it to the first beggar that I meet in the street. Never shall you touch a thing that belonged to that holy maiden, be it a gem or be it a straw. That touch would be a pollution. You have now offered me two alternatives—as last night you did to her—to yield to your demands or die. Agnes told me which to choose.

[*Fulvius pushes Fabiola backwards towards the couch, and draws a stiletto from the folds of his bosom. Fabiola faints.*]

Fulvius. Then die! (*and he raises the arm to strike—at the same moment Syra rushes in, throws herself between her Mistress' life and Fulvius' dagger, and receives the stroke. Fulvius, blind with madness, dashes the dagger to the ground and rushes out of the room. A pause ensues.*)

Fabiola. (*Coming to herself, she releases herself of Syra, who lies fainted on the same couch, arises gently, and perceiving the state of Syra, calls her.*) Syra! Syra! What? blood?.. Ah! now I recollect everything: she was murdered by Fulvius instead of me! (*She runs to the door.*) Afra! Graja! Come, quick!

Afra and Graja. What is the matter?

Fabiola. She is murdered! she is murdered! (*in great desolation,*) Graja, run for a physician. Afra, staunch the blood! (*They both do so.*)

Syra. (*Returning to her senses.*) O Fabiola..my dear mistress..are you safe?

Fabiola. I am, dear; but thou art dying!

Syra. The will of God be done!

Graja. The physician is coming. (*Enter Dyonysius.*)

Dyonysius. (*To Syra.*) My child! Be of good heart! (*He dresses the wound and gives some medicine.*) The wound (*to Fabiola*) is not dangerous. She must now be left perfectly quiet, so as to prevent excitement. If she can fall in a short slumber, it will do her a great deal of good. I will call again by and by.

Fabiola. Very well, sir. (*Exit Dyonysius.*) (*To Afra and Graja.*) You may go, now: I will nurse

her..(*Syra falls asleep. Silence.*) Oh she was no dreamer when she spoke to me about making heroism an ordinary and one's own every day's duty! Can this be a philosophy?... Oh no, it must be a religion!—The religion of Agnes!

Syra. Agnes! (*dreaming*) Oh! (*awaking*) my dearest Mistress!

Fabiola. Oh do not, I entreat you, call me by such a title. But you seem to me better.

Syra. Much better.

Fabiola. Permit me, then, to fulfil without delay the duty which my heart is burning to discharge, that of thanking you, not for the life you have saved me, but for the sacrifice you made for it.

Syra. After all, I did but my duty.

Fabiola. No, no; do not try to make me undervalue your virtue.

Syra. (*Taking Fabiola's hands between both hers.*) Good and gentle lady, that you may see how far, what you prize so much in me, is from what might be done still, let me trace to you a parallel scene, but where all shall be reversed. Suppose a slave—a slave brutish, ungrateful, rebellious to the best of masters: and suppose the stroke, not of an assassin, but of the minister of justice, impend over his head. What would you think of that master, if, out of pure love, and that he might reclaim that wretched slave, he should rush beneath the axe's blow, and leave written in his will that he made that slave heir of his title and of his wealth, and desired him to be considered as his brother?

Fabiola. Oh! Syra, this is too sublime a picture to be believed of man—but only, if ever possible, of a God!

Syra. (*With inspiration.*) AND CHRIST, WHO DID THUS SACRIFICE HIMSELF FOR MAN, WAS TRULY GOD! GOD AND MAN!

Fabiola. Oh! I see! Hence I wish you to give me some further knowledge of this your religious system, which is so coherent in all its parts.

Syra. Well, if you *believe* me, I will attempt to do so.

Fabiola. One who is ready, like you, to die for another will surely not deceive him.

Syra. And now, you have just seized another great principle of Christianity—that of Faith.

Fabiola. Well, I believe, Syra; tell me, then: this Christ, God and man, who offered himself a victim for man, did he take up the cast-off slough of our same humanity, or was a new manhood created expressly for him? Was there any one on earth daring and high enough to call himself his father?

Syra. No: but there was one holy enough and humble enough to be chosen to be His Mother!

Fabiola. And who is *she*?

Syra. One, whom an angel, a sublime Spirit, sent to her from heaven, saluted with these words: "Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee;" one whom "all the generations called and shall call blessed;" one, of whom eight hundred years before a prophet spoke, saying: "behold a virgin shall conceive," and who accordingly conceived, overshadowed by the spirit of God himself. Her name is Mary. Her, and her virtues, especially the attachment she showed to have for virginal purity, when she objected to the honor of being the mother of the Savior, her, I say, many, like our holy friend Agnes, justly choose as the pattern of their lives; and in preference to allowing themselves to be yoked, even by the tenderest ties, seek to fly upwards to heaven on wings of undivided love to God.

Fabiola. If you are not too fatigued, I will ask you one question more.

Syra. No: ask.

Fabiola. What hope can there be for one, who, though she pretended to know every thing, yet was ignorant or rather rash enough to scorn the true wisdom, and sneered at the very death of Him who ransomed her. . . [*a flood of tears stop her speech.*]

Syra. Fabiola, listen to me. "In the days of our Lord there lived a woman who bore the same name as his spotless mother, but who had sinned most degradingly—whilst you would abhor to sin. She became ac-

quainted with the Redeemer; and she loved him, and repented of her sins. She went to him, into the house of a man where he was dining, and she knelt at his feet, and she poured out upon them a flood of tears. .

Fabiola. And how did the Redeemer receive her?

Syra. He defended her against the carping gibes of his host, and said of her: "Her many sins are forgiven because she loved a great deal."

Fabiola. And what became of her?

Syra. When the Redeemer was crucified, two women were privileged to stand close to Him—Mary the sinless and Mary the penitent; to show how unsullied, as well as repentant, love, may walk hand in hand beside Him, who said: "I came not to call the just but sinners to repentance."

Fabiola. (*Falling on her knees and bending, with her face in both her hands, in Syra's lap—sobbing.*) Syra, I wish to be like the penitent Mary. (*Enter Graja and*

Dyonysius.)

Graja. Madam, the physician.

Syra. (*To Dyonysius.*) Venerable priest of God, I confide to your fatherly care this Cathecumen, that you may instruct her in the mysteries of our holy Faith, and regenerate her by the waters of salvation.

Fabiola. What! are you more than a physician?

Dyonysius. I am, my child. Unworthily I hold likewise the higher office of a priest in God's Church. (*Fabiola throws herself at his feet—kissing his hands; and he places his hands upon her head, saying:.*) Be of good courage, daughter; you are not the first of your house, whom God has brought into his holy Church. It is now many years since I was called in here, under the guise of a physician, and baptized a few hours before her death the wife of Fabius.

Fabiola. My mother! And she died a Christian!?

Dyonysius. Yes; and I doubt not that her spirit has been hovering about you through life, guiding you to this blessed hour.

Fabiola. (*Throwing herself in Syra's arms.*) And thou, Syra, thou wert the angel through whom my mother

guided me, as it were, by hand to the present happiness. Oh! allow me, from henceforth, to call thee and to be called by thee *sister*.

Syra. Sister, (*embracing her*) dear sister! now we shall never be separated from each other—for all eternity!

Dyonysius.—Praised be the infinite mercy of God, who accepted this poor slave's sacrifice for her mistress, and made them both truly and equally free in Christ!



ERRATA.

To the Dramatis Personæ, add: TORQUATUS—An Apostate from Christianity.

At page 10 line 2, *over-chastening*, read: over-chastising.

At page 17, line 10, last word, read: Fulvius.

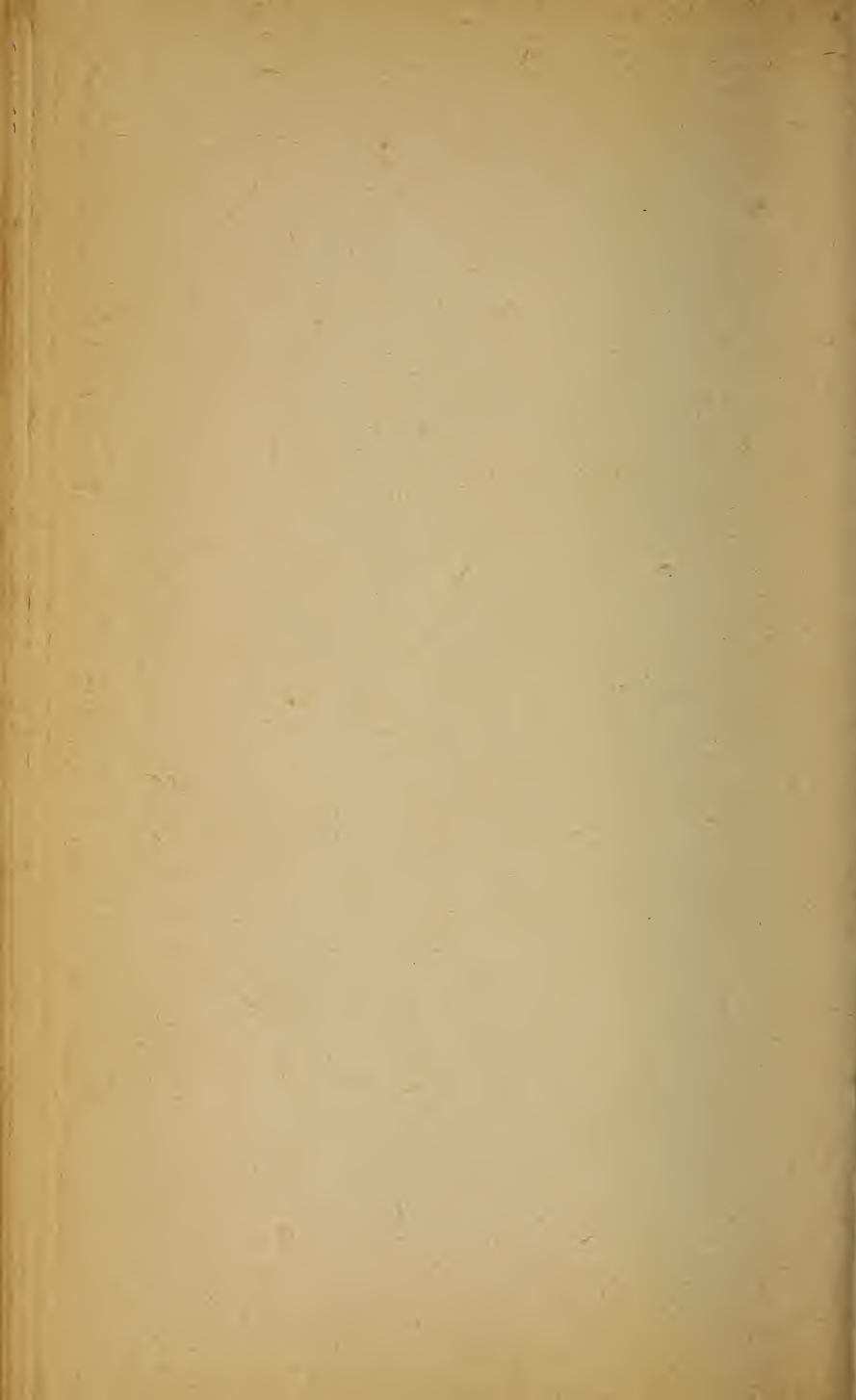
“ “ 22, “ 20, *Agnes*, read: Fulvius.

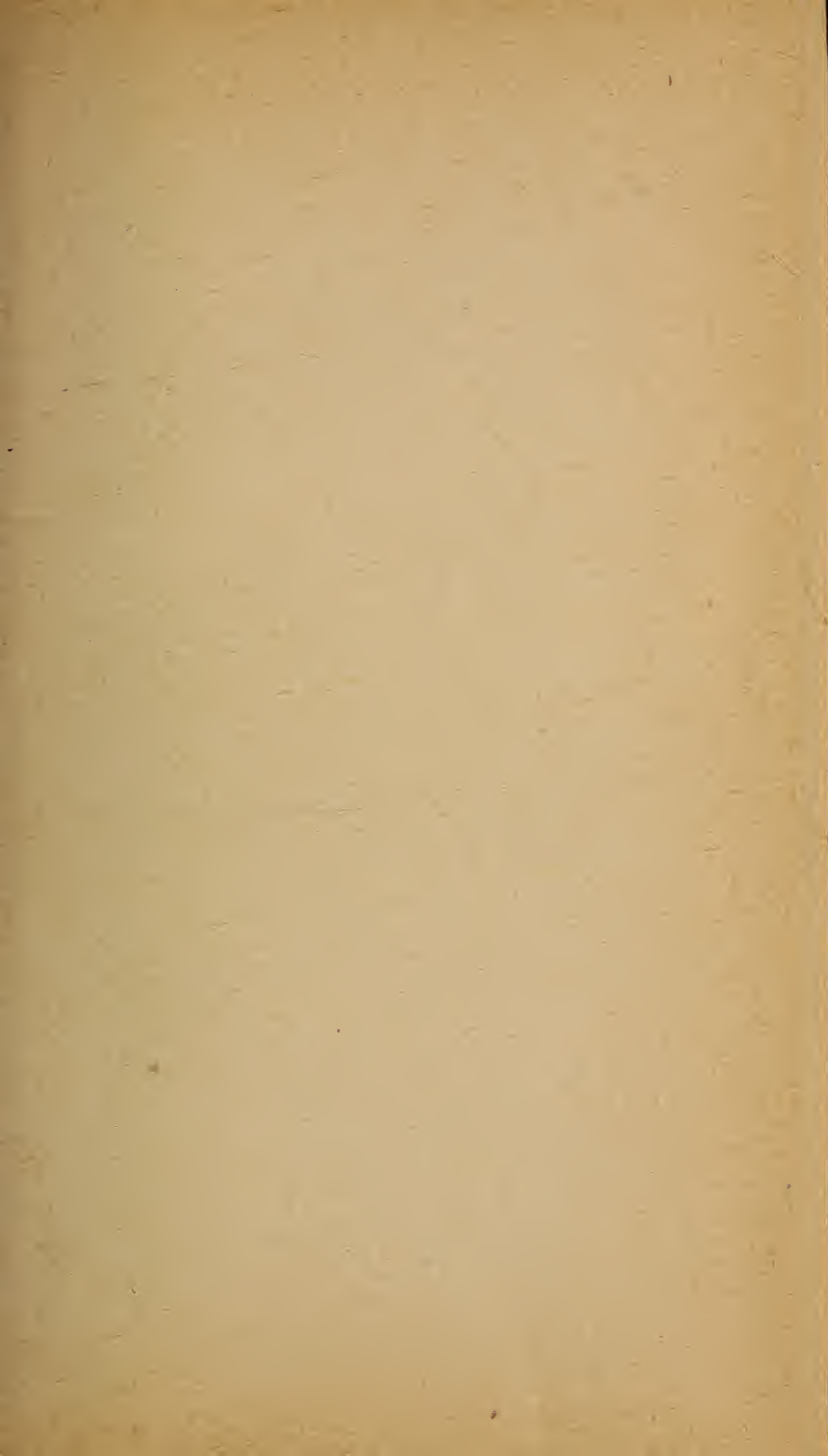
“ “ 29, “ 12, *to the Emperor*, read: the Emperor.

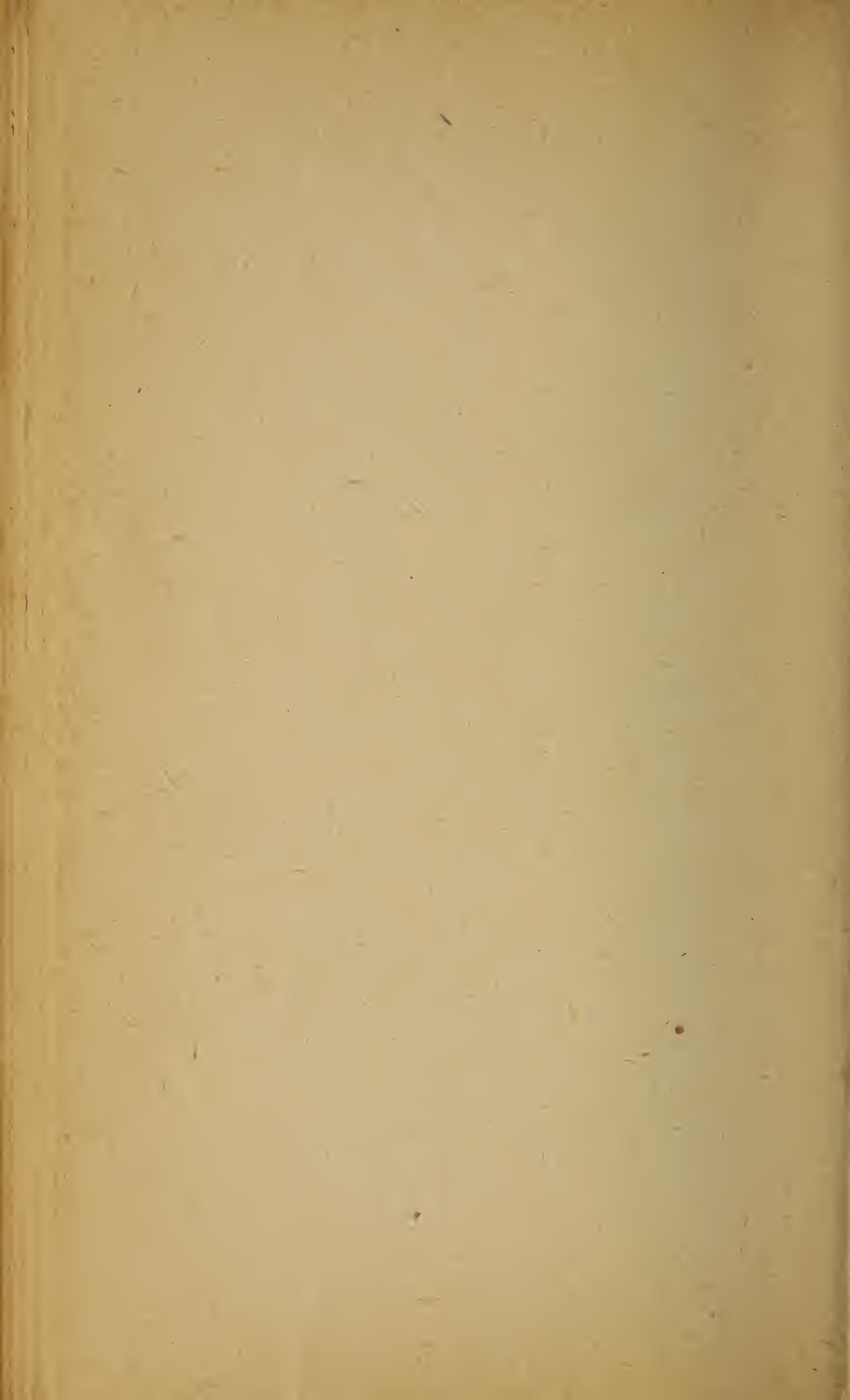
“ “ 34, “ 1, *I think had, I*, read: I think, had I.

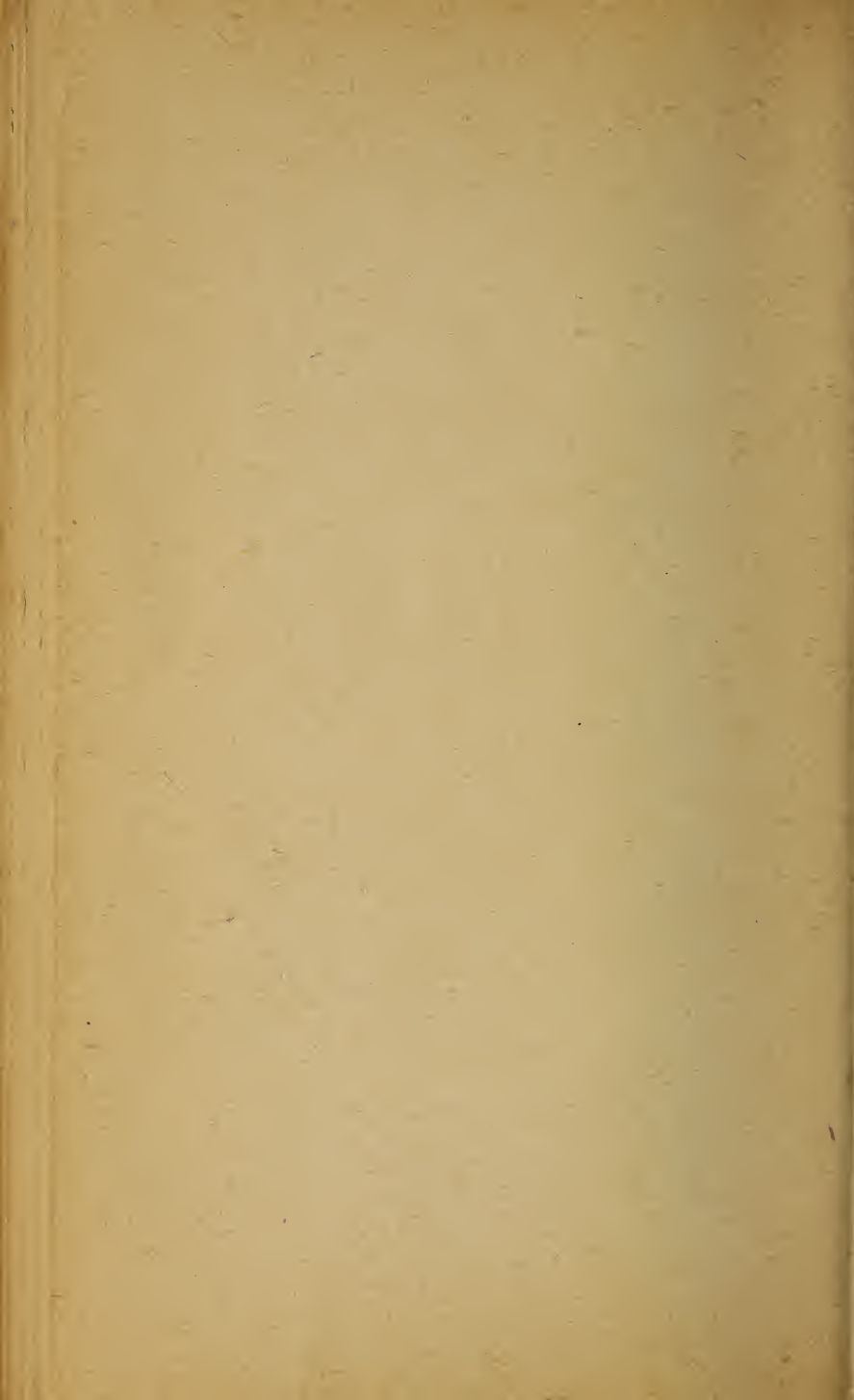
“ “ 34, “ 24, *lovlier*, read: lovelier.

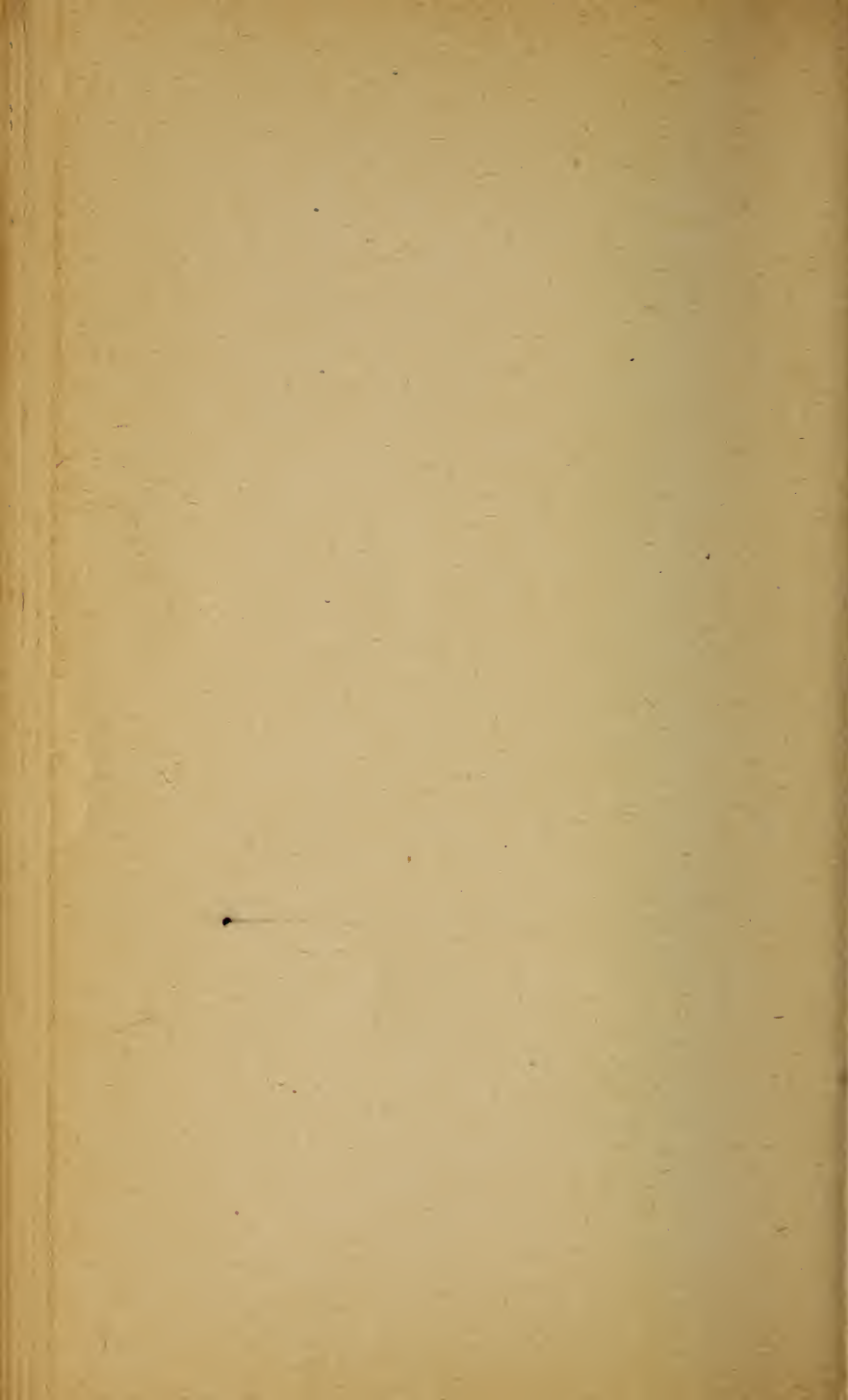
M. M. P.

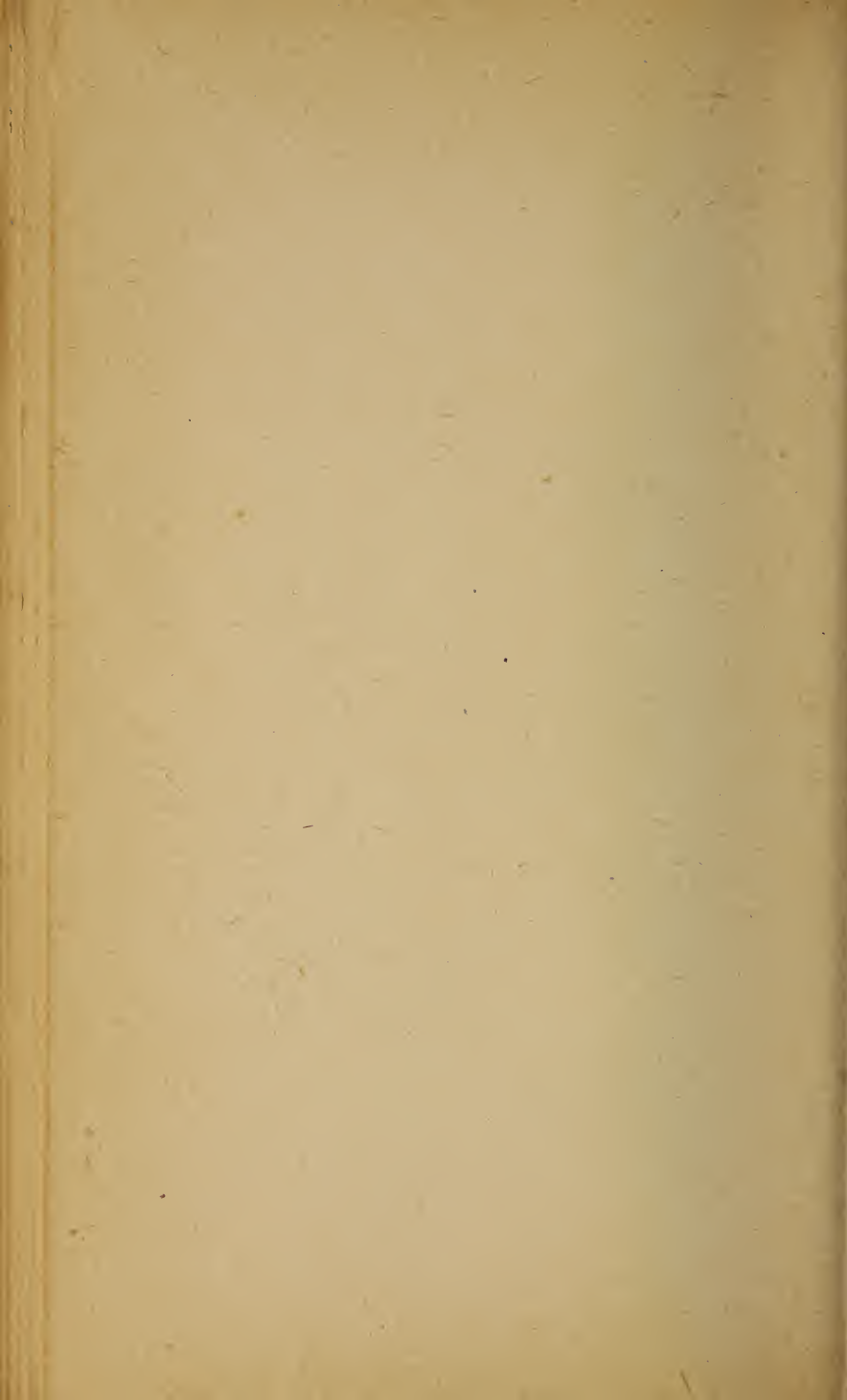


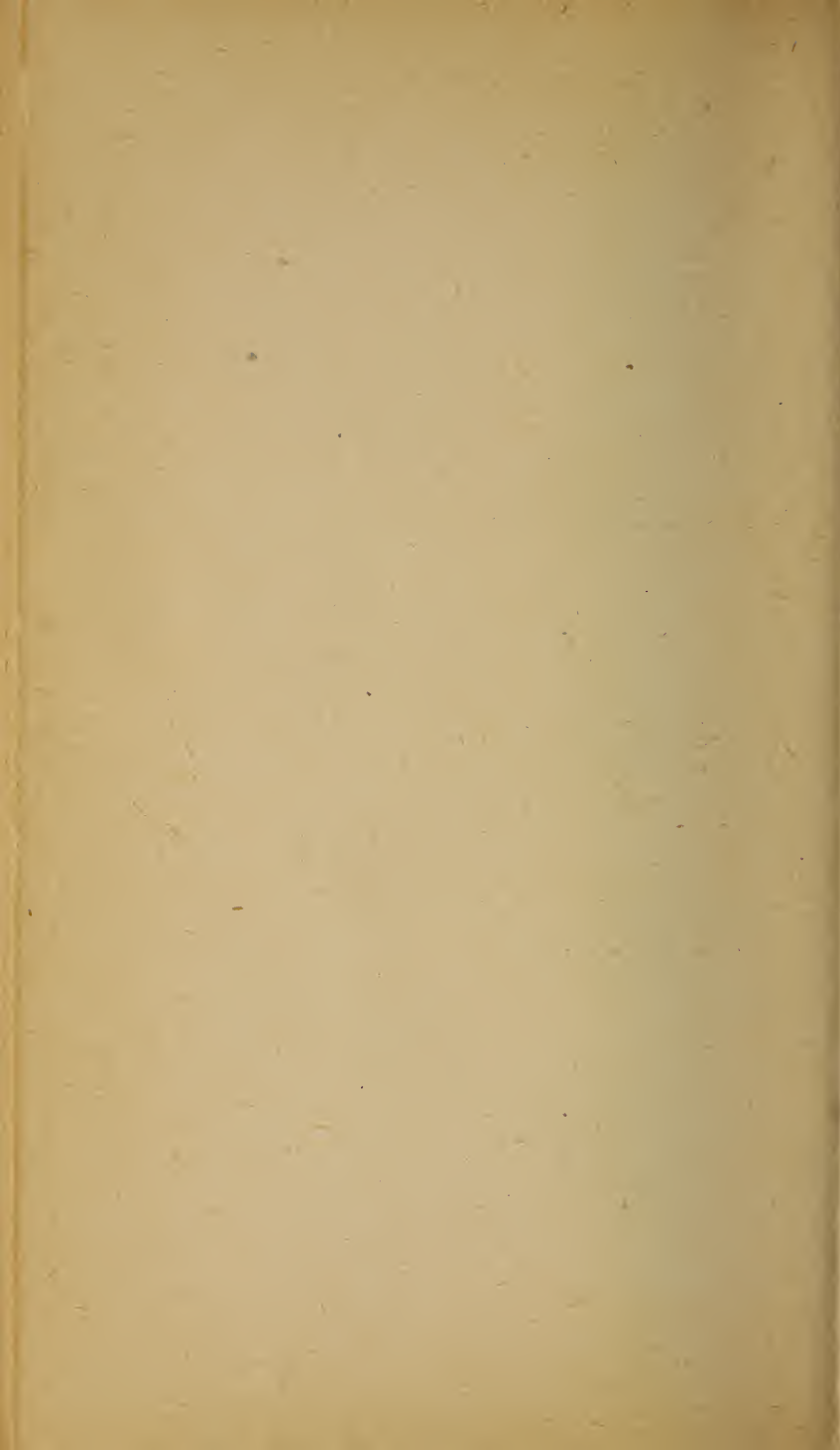




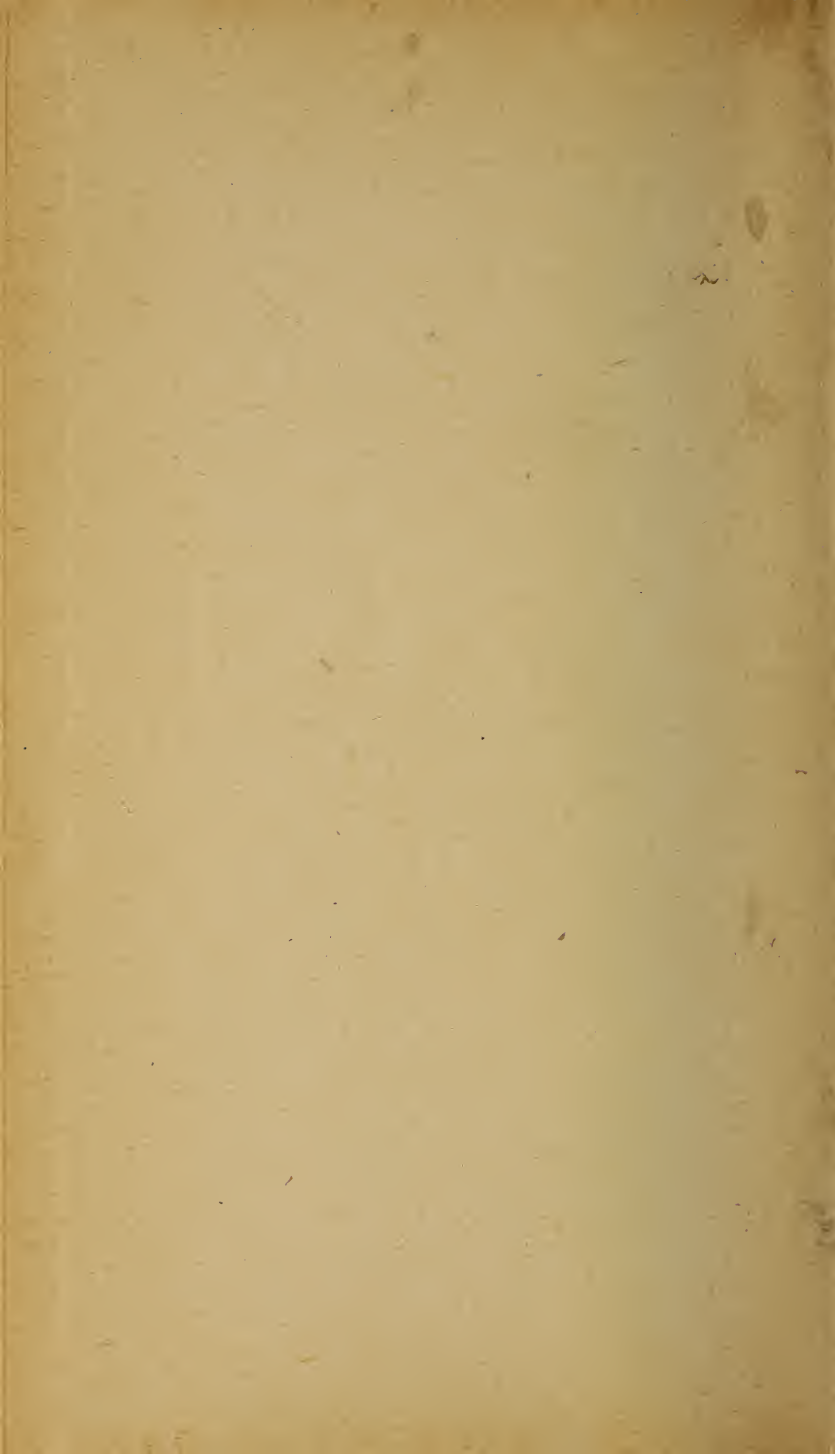


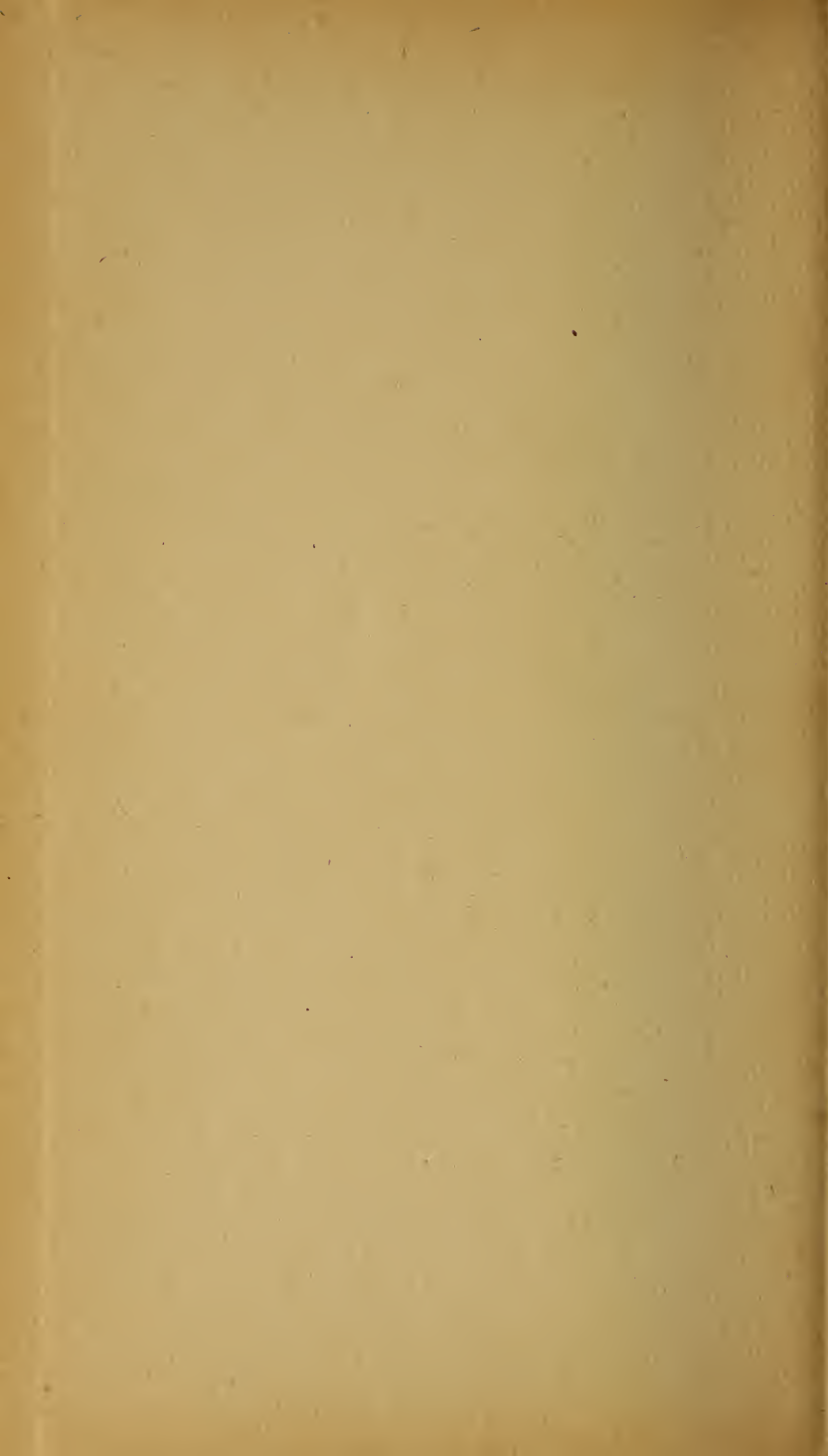






NOV -1 1944





LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 014 641 155 1

